

Historical Overview

History

Settled in the mid-18th century, Loudoun County's population was relatively unchanged between 1790, the first year the U.S. Census was taken, and 1960. Throughout the 170-year period, it remained in the range of 20,000 to 25,000 persons, reflecting the stability of a predominantly rural, agricultural county at the far western reaches of the Washington region. Transportation facilities, including Leesburg Pike (Route 7), Little River Turnpike (U.S. 50) and the Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Railroad, provided early links to the region. Farmers and merchants used the routes to transport their products to the broader market, and District of Columbia residents used them to retreat to the countryside.

This picture began changing in 1960, with population growth in neighboring Fairfax County, construction of the Broad Run Interceptor that would provide sewer service for suburban development in the eastern part of Loudoun County, and the construction of Washington Dulles International Airport in Fairfax and Loudoun Counties. When the airport was built in the mid-1960s on a 10,000-acre site mostly inside Loudoun, much of the land around it was rezoned for industrial uses to accommodate businesses related to the airport.

The opening of the large international airport marked the beginning of a dramatic shift in how rural land outside of Loudoun's towns would be developed. At the time, the towns were the centers of population and commerce in the county, and land beyond town limits was planned for rural residential or agricultural uses.

Population and Employment Growth

Beginning in the 1960s, Loudoun began to grow substantially. Growth has continued to this day, bringing a six-fold increase in population in a forty-year span. In each decade from the 1960s to today, the county's population has risen by at least 50 percent. This population shift from 24,549 in 1960 and to 86,129 in 1990 amounted to 250 percent. By 2000, Loudoun's population had nearly doubled again to an



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estimated 169,599.

Employment growth has accompanied the dramatic increase in population. The number of jobs more than doubled from 40,000 in 1990 to more than 87,000 in 2000. This almost 120-percent rise in at-place employment was due to the addition of more than 2,000 new companies, including several major employers, which sparked commercial construction activity at a scale unprecedented in Loudoun County. The airport set a new course for the county, one whose impact has come into focus as industry giants such as America Online, MCI, Orbital Sciences and Independence Airlines have established their headquarters in the Loudoun community.



Figure 3. America Online Campus. The airport set a new course for the county, one whose impact has come into focus as industry giants such as America Online have established their headquarters in the Loudoun community. (Loudoun County Department of Economic Development)

Today, Loudoun is a growing, dynamic county of about 250,000 people. Much as it has been throughout its history, the county today is a thriving community with rich contrasts in its people, its beautiful scenery, and the comfortable neighborhoods Loudoun's residents call home.